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PROFILE PORTRAIT
OF A YOUNG WOMAN
by DESIDERIO
DA SETTIGNANO
ITALIAN, 1428-1464
*Gift of Mrs. Edsel B. Ford
in memory of her husband
1948*



A PROFILE PORTRAIT OF A YOUNG WOMAN by DESIDERIO

A Profile Portrait of a Young Woman by Desiderio da Settignano (1428-1464), given by Mrs. Edsel B. Ford in memory of her husband, brings into the collection of the Detroit Institute of Arts one of the great Italian sculptures that has come to America.

Desiderio's importance as a sculptor comes from his pre-eminence in two things. He was one of the great representatives of the humanist spirit of the Florentine Renaissance, and he was one of the most remarkable and subtle masters of stone carving in the history of sculpture.

Sculpture is an art whose possibilities and expressive power are not widely felt today. But in the fifteenth century, with four hundred years of incessant activity behind it and a crowd of great living talents to support it, sculpture had reached a point of pre-eminence in the arts, so that sculptors overflowed in the neighboring arts and became leaders in architecture and painting, and all the arts were permeated with sculptural perceptions and interests. Early in the century Donatello had introduced into stone carving a great invention—his *stiacciato* or extremely low pictorial relief—which Desiderio adopted and made his own. Desiderio's ease and control of the medium of stone made him delight in low relief, which he used with a combination of boldness and subtlety unsurpassed in the history of sculpture. He was able to make stone express the softness of a child's skin, or a silk dress, or flowing hair, to make it express the most delicate and evanescent changes of expression in an eye or a mouth; yet at the same time to keep the vigorous strength and character of his material. Grace, delicacy and power meet in remarkable combination in his art. In view of the extraordinary subtlety and finish of his work and the brevity of his life, it is not surprising that the list of his works is not a long one.

Marble was his usual medium but he worked occasionally in the dark Florentine stone called *pietra serena*.

This profile portrait head is carved in rather high relief in a stone panel, twenty-one inches high by thirteen inches. The dark stone shows traces of old polychromy, showing that the *pietra serena* was meant originally to be concealed by color. It belonged once to a famous French collector, Baron Arthur de Schickler, who apparently acquired it, before 1870, from the painter and collector Charles Timbal. (The bulk of Timbal's collection was bought in 1870 by Henri Dreyfus and became the nucleus of his famous collection.) It passed from the Schickler collection to that of Mr. and Mrs. Ford.

The expression of the head is one of grave repose; like, yet unlike, a classical figure of Juno. She is a classical figure in her maturity and robust calm and in a certain classical generalization of type; yet each detail is delicately individual-

ized in a way quite unclassical, while the face has a modesty and even a touch of sadness in the downcast look that give it an exquisite quality of mood.

As is well known, portraiture was revived by the Renaissance artists of Italy, after an interval of almost a thousand years during which portraits in the modern sense were not known. Interest in portraiture went side by side with the study of classical art. The most common form of ancient portrait available for the Renaissance artist to study was the coin or medal, with an emperor's portrait in profile. The first form that portraiture took, therefore, was the sculptured relief.

Desiderio, in creating here one of the masterpieces of Florentine portrait sculpture, was using a revived classical form and filling it with the classical reminiscences which the Florentine humanists loved. But humanism was more, in him, than an external imitation of classic forms. It was a renewal of an attitude toward life. Samuel Taylor Coleridge, the poet, defined the classic spirit in his *Anima Poetae*, "Plain sense, measure, clearness, dignity, grace over all—these made the genius of Greece." In Desiderio's art the ancient qualities were brought to life again. Humanity, balance, dignity, clearness, and grace—what are they but a description of this art?

The great Swiss historian Jacob Burckhardt projected, ninety years ago, a series of philosophical and historical studies of Western culture from the age of Constantine to the Renaissance, of which the famous *Civilization of the Renaissance in Italy* (1860) was to be the closing chapter. "To conceive history as development is to conceive it as history of ideal values, the only ones that have real value," said Croce. Burckhardt saw the clear intelligence, the realism, individualism and love of life of the Florentines not only as qualities admirable in themselves but as the culmination of a historical development. In the twentieth century taste has turned away from the Renaissance. Art historians have turned their interest to more utilitarian or more mystical periods of art. It is surely not accidental that the reaction went furthest in Germany, where some historians tried to prove that Florentine art was a purely local development outside the main stream of European culture. In the United States there has been no such theoretical reaction but practically the change of taste has had the same effect of putting the Renaissance to one side. Burckhardt, on the contrary, saw in the Florentine humanists, artists and patrons alike, men who, living in the midst of political chaos as bad as that of the fifteenth century B. C. or the twentieth A. D., achieved a union of the rational humanism of the classic world with the Christian heritage of the middle ages, thus creating a new spirit which was not only the flowering of a historic process but the key to the destiny of the Western world. Desiderio is one of the artists who gave form to that new spirit.

It is appropriate that such a work should have been given to our museum in memory of Mr. Edsel B. Ford, for the outstanding quality that one remembers in him was his humanity. Everyone on the staff who had to do with him, even in the remotest or most official way, remembers him with affection, not as an executive, or man of business, or a symbol of authority and power, but as a human being. He had a simplicity and warmth, a natural dignity and spon-

taneous courtesy toward everyone he had to deal with, which are the marks of that humane and civilized spirit which we call humanism. His own character was reflected in his taste in art.

E. P. RICHARDSON

Acc. no. 48.152. Relief in grey stone (*pietra serena*). Height, 21 inches; width, 13 inches. The relief has been cracked across the middle on a line crossing the throat, but is otherwise in excellent state of preservation. Collections: Charles Timbal, Paris; Baron Arthur de Schickler, Paris; Edsel B. Ford, Detroit. References: Clarence Kennedy, *The Magdalen and Sculptures in Relief by Desiderio da Settignano and his Associates*, 1929, p. 24; W. R. Valentiner, *Catalogue of an Exhibition of Italian Gothic and Early Renaissance Sculptures*, The Detroit Institute of Arts, 1938, no. 38. Gift of Mrs. Edsel B. Ford in memory of Edsel B. Ford, 1948.

THE GAME OF SKITTLES by JACOB DUCK

Painting in Holland during the seventeenth century is often considered the work of a single school. Yet, while there are certain characteristics and stylistic relationships that bind together the Dutch painters of that period and distinguish them from the painters of Italy, France or England, there were numerous individual schools in Holland, each with its distinctive aims and techniques. One of the least known of these was active in Haarlem during the first half of the seventeenth century; to it may be ascribed some of the most delightful and entertaining of the genre and social group scenes in Dutch art. Dirck Hals and his contemporaries, Palamedes, Pieter Codde and Jacob Duck, are characteristic of this group, which received its inspiration from Frans Hals, the great master of the school. Their paintings have in common a hard enamelled quality of paint and a marked realism which was pleasing and understandable to the prosperous middle classes for whom they were created. The subjects were delineated with sharp, definite outlines contrasting with the soft tones of greys, greens and browns of their palettes. From the boisterous and gay life of the taverns and lively pastimes and amusements of the people, the Haarlem artists created charmingly detailed canvasses of small size suitable for the homes for which they were intended. Among the most popular subjects were studies of soldiers in moments of leisure, gaming and carousing, handled in the manner of a conversation piece and rare in the history of military painting. The brief periods of peace and the end of the Thirty Years War saw many young officers enjoying the noisy entertainments of Dutch life and gave the painters ample opportunity to observe them.

The Game of Skittles by Jacob Duck which has recently been presented to the museum by Mr. and Mrs. Edgar B. Whitcomb is an example of these soldier-genre scenes, or *cortegaarjes*. Our painting represents two young officers amusing themselves with a game of skittles played on a bluff overlooking the sea while a group of men, standing by, watch with great interest. The young officer at the extreme left, having removed his hat and sword, leans forward about to roll the oval flattened ball or "cheese" used in the game as played in



THE GAME OF SKITTLES
by JACOB DUCK, DUTCH, 1600?-1667?
Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Edgar B. Whitcomb, 1948

Holland. Related to our present game of bowling Dutch bowls or skittles was played with a ball and nine pins, the object being to knock over the king pin without disturbing the rest, or to knock over the others and leave the king pin standing. The young man about to bowl receives advice from his older friend who stands beside him gesturing towards the pins. Both are dressed in the elaborate, rather foppish manner of the day, with large brimmed hats with plumes or ribbons, fine lace collars, and colorful sashes. Their elegant appearance is in sharp contrast to the rather tattered costume of the group of onlookers at the right.

Duck and his contemporaries usually presented their soldiers against the background of the guard room, tavern or some other interior. In our *Game of Skittles* the scene takes place out of doors and called for the collaboration between Duck and the Flemish marine painter, Adam Willaerts (1577-1664), who spent most of his life in Holland and like Duck was a member of the Utrecht Guild. Such collaboration of artists seems rather unusual to us, yet it was not uncommon during the seventeenth century. Peter-Paul Rubens and Jan (Velvet) Brueghel, for instance, worked together on numerous canvasses, while Claude Lorrain is known to have enlisted the assistance of Pieter van Laer who supplied the figures in some of his landscapes.

The details of Jacob Duck's life are rather vague. Recent research, however,

has established the fact that he was born in Utrecht about 1600. He is listed in the books of the Utrecht Guild in 1621 as a student, and his name appears again in 1630-32 as a master in the same guild. While he was apparently living in the Hague at the time of his death around 1667, his active years were spent in Haarlem. The acquisition of a painting by Jacob Duck is of special interest not only because it brings to the Museum its first representation of the Haarlem painters of that period, but also because Duck's work is extremely rare in American collections.

W. E. WOOLFENDEN

Acc. no. 48.13. Panel. Height 21½ inches; width 31½ inches. Formerly in the collection of Marzell von Nemes (no. 50 of the sale catalogue, Paris, 1913). Exhibited: Museum of Fine Arts, Budapest, 1911; Museum of Fine Arts, Dusseldorf, 1912. Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Edgar B. Whitcomb, 1948.

A FRAGMENT OF A PARACAS SHAWL

During the first five centuries of our era a remarkable culture flourished in Southern Peru. It is called Early Nazca, from the name of a coastal valley well watered by a perennial river. Here several sites have yielded to the spade of the archaeologist and, before him, to the robber of the graves, many wonderful specimens both of polychrome pottery and textiles. North of the valley of Nazca there juts forth into the Pacific Ocean the Paracas Peninsula. Here, in 1925, systematical excavations were begun under the direction of the late Dr. Julio Cesar Tello of Lima, and several cemeteries were discovered. The burials show the mummies dressed in beautiful tunics and mantles and wrapped in long winding sheets of plain white cotton.

The weavers of Paracas were good craftsmen; but the embroiderers were artists. Today many museums own Paracas textiles, complete garments or parts of such. A specialty of Paracas was the making of long scarves or shawls which probably were used as mantles. The fragment here described was once part of a shawl; another fragment, with border and fringe, is in the collection of the Textile Museum of the District of Columbia.¹

On medium fine, brilliant red wool ground alternating rows of approximately square shapes are embroidered in crewel stitch, in slightly finer, because more firmly twisted, wool. Each of these squares serves as the background for a figure, worked in combinations of yellow and purple, and brown, yellow and purple wool. These figures are placed in alternate directions, head to head or feet to feet, according to the formalistic tendency of Early Nazca design. They move in a *danse macabre*; the clearly marked protruding ribs proclaim them as apparitions of dead people, as specters. The costume is that of a warrior, a short fringed kilt or tunic. The face is covered by a mask; a huge helmet seems to be fastened beneath the chin. The head is turned sideways and continues the elegant curve of the bent torso, the high crest topping the helmet hangs down

like flowing hair. Each figure holds in the right hand a knife of the "chopper" type, in the left a spearthrower.

Stylistically all the wonderful specimens of needlework from the Paracas cemeteries belong to the art of the Early Nazca culture; possibly they represent one especially early phase of this splendid art. The textile design of Paracas is altogether confined to embroidery and a specialized form of three-dimensional knitting, of figurines, birds, animals and plants, used for neck ornaments and borders of garments.

ADELE COULIN WEIBEL

¹Acc. no. 44.221. Length 12 inches; width 11¾ inches. Gift of Robert H. Tannahill, 1944.

The specimen in the Textile Museum of the District of Columbia is illustrated in Pal Kelemen, *Medieval American Art*, New York, 1943, vol. II, pl. 175.

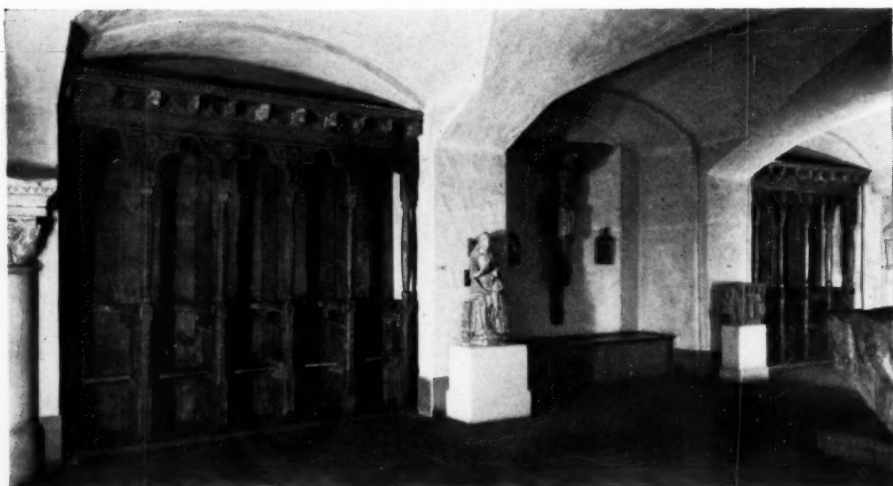


FRAGMENT OF PARACAS SHAWL
PERUVIAN (BEFORE 500 A.D.)
Gift of Robert H. Tannahill, 1944

FOURTEENTH CENTURY PAINTED CHOIRSTALLS FROM ASTUDILLO IN SPAIN

The Romanesque Hall has taken on a new appearance with the installation of two groups of colorful fourteenth century Spanish choirstalls from the church of the convent of Santa Clara in Astudillo, a small town not far from Palencia in northern central Spain.¹ This convent was founded in 1353 by the celebrated Doña Maria de Padilla, mistress of Don Pedro I, King of Castile from 1350 to 1369. The ten stalls were once part of a continuous series, probably totaling fifty stalls in all, arranged in a semi-hexagonal plan around the choir of the conventual church and intended to accommodate the fifty nuns for whom the monastery was established.

For over five hundred and fifty years these stalls remained in situ, almost



FOURTEENTH CENTURY CHOIRSTALLS FROM ASTUDILLO, SPAIN
*Gift of the Founders Society General Membership Fund
as installed in the Romanesque Hall in 1948*

ignored, yet we recognize them today as among the oldest existing Spanish choirstalls, only a few others dating earlier than the middle of the fourteenth century; as the oldest surviving examples with high backs and overhanging roof, forerunners of the later characteristic Spanish choirstalls; and as the richest of all the early choirstalls in their painted decoration.

In 1896 Francisco Simon y Nieto² spoke of the Astudillo stalls as "simple, rude, primitive, but highly interesting." To our knowledge, they were first illustrated by Pelayo Quintero y de Atauri in the first edition of his book on Spanish choirstalls, published in 1908.³ Their historical significance and artistic importance were belied by their appearance at that time, for the raising of the

level of the choir floor had covered the lower part of the stalls, which had then largely rotted away from dampness. It was fortunate for their preservation that sometime before 1931 permission was given by the ecclesiastical authorities to sell the stalls so that the proceeds might be applied to the maintenance of the nuns, then few in number and subsisting on a few cents a day. Four of the time-damaged stalls entered the National Archeological Museum in Madrid in 1931 and were described and illustrated at that time.⁴ Ten more stalls, with their lower portions restored, but their brilliant polychromy almost intact, have now come to Detroit to present to museum visitors a distinguished example of medieval Spanish ecclesiastical furniture and of Mudéjar carpentry and decoration.

For all their apparent simplicity and primitive character, the Astudillo stalls are skillfully assembled from well-organized woodwork and are elaborately decorated with a planned ornamentation. The framework is fitted together with mortises and tenons, with few pegs or nails; the flat surfaces of the sides and



PAINTED PINE CHOIRSTALLS (DETAIL OF CORNICE AND COLONNETTES)
SPANISH (ASTUDILLO), ABOUT 1353-1361

Gift of the Founders Society General Membership Fund, 1947

backs of the seats are simple panels, fitted into grooves in the framework. The whole is tied together by the long beams at the top and made firm by the almost continuous piece of heavy wood that curves around the backs of the seats. This piece was originally pinned down by large iron spikes, almost the only nails used in the whole structure. The roof, a separate construction of many parts, is carefully planned in its placing of the transverse beams and its decoration with relation to the seats and colonnettes below. It was originally nailed to the upper part of the stalls. The wood used appears to be pine throughout.

Most noteworthy, however, is the painted decoration, confined to the octag-

onal, gracefully swelling colonnettes which divide the seats, to the arcaded facing above the seats, and to the interior of the roof and the exterior of the architrave and cornice. This painted ornament is too rich in color and too varied in pattern to be described here in detail. The paint, whether tempera or oil (for the best authorities disagree on the medium), was applied over a thin coat of white plaster, which gave a smooth surface and a brilliant background for over-painting. To distinguish the colors as they are now and as they once may have been is not easy. What may have been a brilliant blue or a strong green has now changed to green or greenish-black. The prevailing color-scheme, as we see it, is dark red and green, with touches of ocre yellow, bright red, light blue, white and black. The aspect of the whole is just what would be expected of a polychromed work of art in medieval Spain. It is the color-scheme found on the painted wooden ceilings⁵ with which these choirstalls are to be compared not only in decoration but also in carpentry. It is a color scheme found also in Hispano-Moresque textiles.

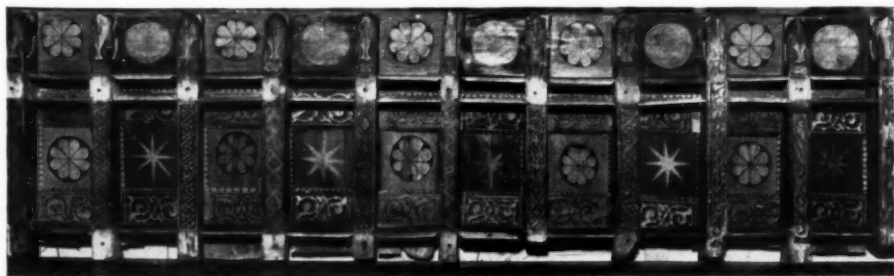
Of the decorative elements three only will be mentioned; the rest should be studied on the stalls or from the illustrations with this article. The running vine with curling leaves which appears so often here is a characteristic motive of Mudéjar decoration, part of the vocabulary of the Moorish artists working in Christian Spain. The curious carving and painting of the beam-ends on the cornice to represent animal heads with big black eyes, bright red cheeks, fierce sharp teeth, and long red tongues is found in varying degrees of realism from the fourteenth to the sixteenth century on the wooden ceilings of Spain. And finally, the profusion of coats-of-arms on the stalls reflects the Spanish love of heraldic display. Here are the castles of Castile and the lions of Leon, for Don Pedro, and the rampant lion in a lozenge surrounded by four frying-pans or baker's-peels (Spanish, *padilla*), a punning device referring to Maria de Padilla, patroness of the monastery. On the ten stalls in Detroit there are no less than ninety coats-of-arms, and eighty-one of these are the arms of the Padilla.

But to describe their structure and their decoration and to praise them as works of art, is to tell only part of the story of these choirstalls. They are manifestations of medieval piety and evidences of a great love that linked the sinister despot, Don Pedro the First of Castile, who came to the throne in 1350, and the beautiful Doña Maria de Padilla, whom he met shortly after.⁶

It was sometime in 1351 or 1352 that Don Pedro met Maria and fell madly in love with her. According to some historians, they were secretly married in Seville. She bore him three daughters and a son, Don Alfonso, who was born in 1359, was declared heir to the throne in 1362, and died the same year, to the great dismay of his father. In 1353 Don Pedro contracted a political marriage with Blanche de Bourbon, but he would have nothing to do with the French princess, keeping her virtually a prisoner until she died in 1361 (some say by poison at the King's order). During this time the beautiful and capable Maria de Padilla held the King's heart enthralled and, although he engaged in transient love affairs, he always returned to her. Great was his sorrow when in July 1361,

only a few days after the death of Blanche de Bourbon, Maria died. There was mourning throughout the court and the kingdom, for Maria had had some restraining power over the headstrong king and the terrors of his reign could not be attributed to her. According to her wish, her body was taken to Astudillo and buried in her monastery of Santa Clara, but it did not rest there long, for in 1362 Don Pedro proclaimed her his legal wife and his true queen, producing witnesses of a marriage that preceded his official marriage to Blanche de Bourbon and his bigamous espousal of Juana de Castro (a short-lived romance of 1354), and with regal pomp, the body of the Padilla was escorted over the long road to Seville, where it was placed in the Chapel of the Kings in the Cathedral.

Controversy prevails as to the reason for the founding of the monastery at Astudillo by Maria de Padilla. Was it to be a refuge for her when other love affairs distracted the attention of the king? Was she planning to take the veil? Or was it, as documents in the monastery archives⁷ seem to prove, the characteristic act of a medieval woman of prominence and piety? To be sure the King seems to have deserted Maria for Juana de Castro at the very time when Maria presented him with a second daughter, named Constanza as if to express the King's constancy. To be sure Pope Innocent VI fulminated against the king's behavior and urged him to put Maria in a convent and return to his wife, Blanche de Bourbon. Piety alone, however, seems to have been the compelling reason. A preliminary license for the founding of the monastery was issued on November 23, 1353; this was confirmed by papal bulls of April 5, 1354, in which the Pope, at the request of Maria de Padilla and the King of Castile, gave permission for the founding of a monastery to shelter fifty nuns of the Franciscan order of Santa Clara, and furthermore permitted Maria to visit convents of that order once each year, presumably to observe their administration, but she was not to stay over night or eat a meal. This hardly sounds as though Maria was being forced or urged to enter a monastery as a nun. That she was, however, foundress and patroness of the convent at Astudillo is abundantly proved by the archives. She secured the permission to found it and she and her family endowed it with lands and other properties and income.



PAINTED PINE CHOIRSTALLS (DETAIL OF INTERIOR OF ROOF)
SPANISH (ASTUDILLO), ABOUT 1353-1361
Gift of the Founders Society General Membership Fund, 1947

For this monastery, which must have been built between 1353 and 1361, Maria de Padilla undoubtedly not only called upon local workmen but had the assistance of Mudéjar artisans from Seville where Don Pedro, in the midst of civil strife, found time to encourage the building arts. These court artists brought new Moorish influences to strengthen the local Mudéjar style. Skill in carpentry and a love of all-over enrichment of surfaces are only two of the characteristics of Mudéjar. In the Astudillo choirstalls the construction of the wooden framework is certainly Mudéjar and so also is the painted decoration which, unlike the more Gothic ceiling paintings of Teruel and other places in the fourteenth century, employs no human figures but only a repeated pattern of coats-of-arms and large formal rosettes and stars contrasted with a curvilinear vine motive. The color-scheme, as has been noted, is also in the Hispano-Moresque tradition.

Look now again upon these choirstalls which enrich a long wall in the Romanesque Hall with their graceful architecture and handsome polychromy, and see them not only for the important works of Spanish medieval art which they are but also as monuments of religious piety in a country torn with warfare, intrigue, and the struggle for power, and as tokens of the celebrated romance of Doña Maria de Padilla and Don Pedro el Cruel, which is entwined in the history and legend of Spain in the fourteenth century.

FRANCIS W. ROBINSON

¹Acc. no. 47.91 a and b. Painted pine. Height (a) 9 feet 8 inches, (b) 9 feet 8 inches; length (a) 10 feet 8½ inches, (b) 11 feet; depth (a) 25 inches, (b) 24¼ inches; width of each seat 25 inches. Gift of the Detroit Museum of Art Founders Society, General Membership and Donations Fund, 1947.

²Francisco Simon y Nieto, "El Monasterio de Santa Clara de Astudillo—Indice de su Archivo . . .", *Boletín de la Real Academia de la Historia*, Madrid, 1896, vol. XXIX, p. 118.

³Pelayo Quintero y de Atauri, *Silleras de Coro en las Iglesias Españolas*, first edition, Madrid, 1908, p. 30; second edition, Cadiz, 1928, pp. 39-40, without illustration.

⁴Emilio Camps Cazorla, *Sillas del Coro de Santa Clara de Astudillo*, *Museo Arqueológico Nacional, Adquisiciones en 1931*, Madrid, 1932, 8 pp., 2 figs., 2 pls.

⁵On Spanish painted ceilings see especially Arthur Byne and Mildred Stapley, *Decorated Wooden Ceilings in Spain*, New York, 1920, text (Hispanic Notes and Monographs II) and portfolio of plates, and "Gothic Painted Ceilings from Teruel", *The Art Bulletin*, June 1947, Vol. IX, pp. 343-350; José F. Rafols, *Techumbres y Artesonados Españoles*, Barcelona, 1926.

⁶For the history of Don Pedro, Dona Maria de Padilla and their times see Prosper Merimee, *Histoire de Don Pedre Ier, Roi de Castille*, Paris, 1848, new edition, 1865 (based upon the contemporary chronicler, Ayala); Juan Catalina Garcia, *Castilla y Leon durante los Reinados de Pedro I, Enrique II, Juan I y Enrique III* (*Historia General de Espana*), Madrid, 1891, vol. I.

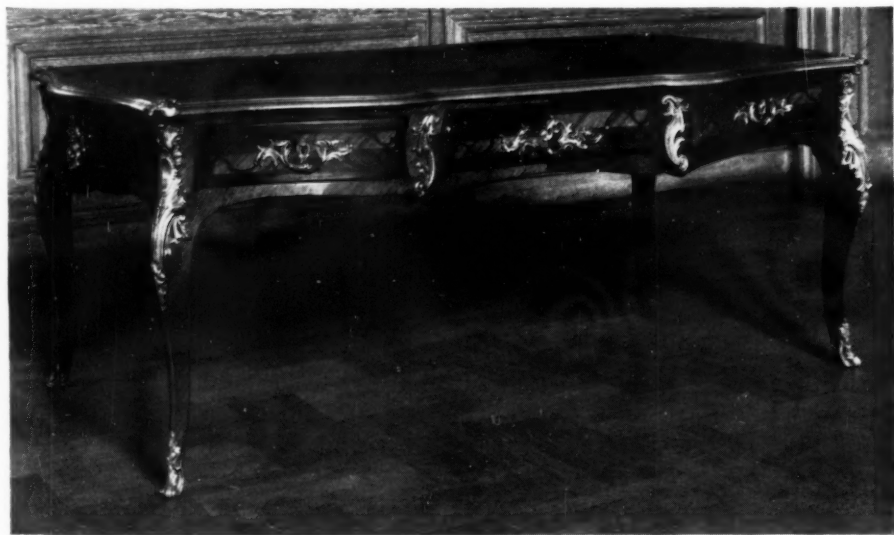
⁷Francisco Simon y Nieto, *op. cit.*, pp. 118-178.

AN EIGHTEENTH CENTURY FRENCH WRITING TABLE

When the Institute's eighteenth century French room was renovated two years ago a handsome writing table of the Louis XV period was lent to the museum. This piece has now become a part of the permanent collection through the generosity of Robert H. Tannahill. It is reported to come from Nancy in Lorraine and to have belonged to Stanislas Lesczynski, dethroned king of Poland.

In 1725 Maria Leszczyńska, daughter of Stanislas, had become the consort of Louis XV and Queen of France. Ten years later, after a halfhearted and futile attempt to restore Stanislas to the Polish throne, Louis XV obtained the independent Duchy of Lorraine for Stanislas, on whose death Lorraine would be inherited by France through the Queen. Immediately, however, France was the virtual ruler, and Stanislas enjoyed the intellectual and artistic possibilities of his position until his death in 1766.

Lorraine had a great artistic heritage. Such artists as Claude, the painter, Callot, the engraver, and Boffrand, the architect had worked there. In the second quarter of the eighteenth century Stanislas had at his disposal the architect Héré and the metalworker Jean Lamour, to create the squares, buildings, gates and gardens that made Nancy a rococo city. There were also highly skilled cabinet makers, but available records neither name them nor mention Stanislas' patronage of them. However, we can assume that Stanislas furnished his chateaux and other buildings with the chairs, writing tables, etc., made by local craftsmen.



WRITING TABLE
FRENCH, ABOUT 1735
Gift of Robert H. Tannahill, 1948

Although Versailles in the eighteenth century was the center of the rococo style which spread throughout continental Europe, there was less discrepancy between fashions of the court and those of provincial salons than in preceding periods. A writing table made for Stanislas in Lorraine would hardly be distinguishable in design or execution from one made in Paris or Versailles. Our writing table, with the graceful elongated S curve of its legs repeated in the outline of apron and top, its fine mahogany veneer, green leather top, and ormolu decoration, is characteristic of the finest Louis XV period furniture. The ormolu, or gilt bronze, which decorates drawers, legs and table top edge is particularly beautiful in its delicate rococo scrolls.

Some of the pieces made for the king were more elaborate, even to the point of tour de force in the use of woods and ornateness in decoration, but a writing table such as this was equally well made and to our taste is more beautifully designed. That it belonged to Stanislas is quite plausible, but regardless of this interesting historical connection it is an integral part of the eighteenth century French room, creating with the other pieces of furniture, panelling, fabrics and porcelains the setting of eighteenth century aristocratic life, thereby enriching our knowledge of a past era.

JOYCE BLACK GNAU

Acc. no. 48.167. Height 30¼ inches; width 39 inches; length 78 inches. Gift of Robert H. Tannahill, 1948.

A REALISTIC LANDSCAPE by FRAGONARD

Eighteenth century French painters are renowned, in addition to other qualities, for their love of change and their versatility; but none is more diverse than Jean-Honoré Fragonard. "Peintre-Protée," he seems to have drawn or painted everything, from splendid illustrations for the works of Ariosto or La Fontaine to the most tender family groups and the most delightful landscapes of the period; from historical scenes and portraits (the only "noble" genres according to his contemporaries) to some of the most frivolous subjects perpetrated in the *siècle de Voltaire*. "Peintre-miroir," reflecting in his work numberless influences, he owes a debt of gratitude to every school of painting, to every painter—to Watteau and Tiepolo, to Rubens and Pietro da Cortona, to the Bolonese as well as the Florentines. There are in his *œuvre* enchanting pasticcios of Solimena and Chardin, and sketches so close to Boucher that we hesitate to accept them as having been painted by the "divine Frago." It is only after some study that the *griffe du maître*, the mark of the master, makes itself felt.

The most subtle influence upon Fragonard, the most interesting therefore to study, is probably that of the Dutch school. Did Fragonard ever visit Holland? It is difficult to say.¹ There are a few of his sketches (only two are known today, I believe) which according to some of his biographers could have been

painted only in The Hague or in one of the Dutch provinces; somehow these meagre proofs of a northern voyage are not absolutely convincing. Yet the influence of the Netherlands is evident in Fragonard's work. The famous portraits "painted in an hour's time," as the artist proudly wrote on the back of one of them, have the bravura and the boldness of the works of Franz Hals (then almost unknown in Paris) and Fragonard's *sépias*, with their soft oppositions of dark and light amber tones, have the shadowy quality of the Rembrandt wash drawings which his patrons admired so much. There is another link between Fragonard and the Dutch painters: if, in his mythological scenes and many of his more conventional portraits he remembers Venice, Rome and Florence more than Haarlem or Amsterdam, in his "pure" landscapes at least he is closer to the great and small masters of the Netherlands, Ruysdael or Hobbema, Wouwerman or Wynants. These realistic landscapes, about which we know little, are comparatively rare in the prolific painter's *œuvre*—fifteen or twenty possibly.² Only a few have found their way into the United States; small and intimate, "collectors' pieces" par excellence, most of these are preserved in private collections, a notable exception being the splendid *Rentrée du troupeau* in the Worcester Museum. To this group may now be added a beautifully subdued landscape, given a few weeks ago to the Institute by Mr. and Mrs. Edgar B. Whitcomb, two collectors whose interest in Fragonard is of long standing; it was one of the forty-odd paintings and drawings by Honoré Fragonard in the famous collection of eighteenth century French art gathered by M. David-Weill.³

The Detroit *Landscape* has no subject. There are, it is true, a few characters. A white bull ruminates placidly, sunning himself in an island of light which makes him the most conspicuous prop in the picture; a horseman talks to a beggar, while in the distance a few travelers are advancing slowly towards them; and, flat on his stomach, leisurely balancing his naked feet in the approved tradition of shepherds looking at shepherdesses, a young peasant in red breeches contemplates a rather disdainful young girl seated away from him. But there is no drama, no desire to tell a story. Our picture is a pure landscape, that is to say, it was painted, like most realistic landscapes of the period, because it allowed the artist to look for one more possible solution of an endless and ever-new pictorial problem; the interrelation of light and shadows. And so, although most of these Fragonard landscapes resemble each other closely, with their sharply outlined trees, their darkened rain clouds, their golden sunrays acting like spotlights on a stage, our *Landscape* is really one of several "variations on the same theme," each with its own personality and charm.

The Dutch had solved the problems of chiaroscuro in landscape painting better than the artists of other schools. To them Fragonard, when working on our *Landscape*, turned for his inspiration. Hobbema was fond of such meagre trees making strong patterns in tormented skies; similar maple tree trunks with their loosened white bark, found in the foreground of most of Wynants's works, are in a way his trade-mark. The overcast sky, with its gleams of oblique light, reminds one of Ruysdael's numberless "Views near Haarlem," and even the

rider on his squatty horse, with his plumetted hat and his baroque *collerette*, looks like a *Jonker* painted by Wouverman. One would say that the artist had set out to prove that he could paint like the Dutch; and of course he could.

But our *Landscape* is not one of the "Paysages dans le gout flamand" that Queen Maria Leszczynska loved to copy. It is unmistakably a French painting by a French painter. These trunks are painted with the care and deliberation that Chardin, Fragonard's first master, lavished upon his still-lives: these clouds do not have the romantic melancholy of the low skies over Dutch dykes and imply nothing more than the coming of a short and not very threatening shower, of the type that travelers to France know so well. More convincingly French still are the soft, fluid gray-blue hills outlined on the horizon: they are the first spurs of the Alps, somewhere in lower Provence (Fragonard's native province), or in Vaucluse, where Petrarch, the first modern poet to sing of nature, had loved Laura.

The small group of "realistic views" by Fragonard and his contemporaries—Demarne, Moreau l'ainé, and others whose works are often difficult to identify and can easily be confused with Fragonard's—marks an important date in the



LANDSCAPE
by FRAGONARD, FRENCH, 1732-1806
Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Edgar B. Whitcomb, 1948

evolution of landscape painting in France. Until then eighteenth century art patrons had been content with the dreamy *vaghezza* of Watteau's backgrounds or the delightfully artificial nature of Boucher's decorative panels. When these small landscapes were shown to the collectors of the 1760's and 70's, at the time when Rousseau and Diderot were preaching "the cult of nature and truth," their serene, earthy realism acted like a breath of fresh air. Du Barry "The Rake," the fickle Comte de Gramont, as well as M. Lenoir-Dubreuilh, the banker, found in the unobtrusive paintings a reflection of nature as it is, and not as Academists thought it should be.⁴

And indeed it is no exaggeration to say that, in the long, unbroken evolution of French landscape paintings from Fouquet to Cézanne, Fragonard's "Views" are the first modern landscapes. Almost all the qualities we admire in the best works of the Barbizon School, three generations later, are represented here. Exactitude and impersonality, sincerity and humility, above all a feeling for the complexity of nature and the quality and color of light, these were to be the characteristics of the "Painters of 1830": they can be detected already in the landscape which takes its place in the Institute's collection of eighteenth century French art, besides such great paintings as Nattier's *Madame Henriette* and Lancret's *Hunting Repast*, and such rare and delightfully intimate works as Allais' *Portrait of an Officer* or Etienne Aubry's *Shepherdess of the Alps*.

PAUL L. GIGAUT

¹Cf. Pierre de Nolhac, *Fragonard*, Paris, 1931, pp. 218-221; Louis Réau, "Les influences flamandes et hollandaises dans l'œuvre de Fragonard," *Revue Belge d'Archéologie* . . . t. II, 1932, pp. 100-104.

²A comprehensive article on "Fragonard's Realistic Landscapes" by Jacques Wilhelm will be published in the Autumn 1948 issue of *Art Quarterly*. According to Mr. Wilhelm and E. Dacier (in *La Gravure de genre et de mœurs*), the earliest engravings after Fragonard were *Annette à 15 ans* and *Annette à 20 ans* (1772); they are typical examples of Fragonard's realistic landscapes.

³Acc. no. 48.215. Canvas. Height 15 inches; width 18 inches. *Catalogue David-Weill*, vol. I, *Peintures*, p. 115 (reproduced). Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Edgar B. Whitcomb, 1948.

⁴Cf. Portalis, *Fragonard*, Paris, 1884, pp. 62-66.

TWO PORCELAIN BOWLS by JOHN A. FOSTER

From the recent Michigan Artist-Craftsmen Exhibition the Detroit Institute of Arts has acquired two remarkable porcelain bowls by the Detroit ceramist, John A. Foster. One, the lower, broader of the two,¹ glazed pale green and white, is the gift of Miss Sarah M. Sheridan; the taller,² glazed blue-green and brown, is the gift of Dr. and Mrs. George Kamperman.

Each of the bowls is of a simple, distinguished shape that has not lost its relationship to usefulness, and its decorative beauty is the result, not so much of the ingenuity and facility of a designer's hand, as of the natural, though controlled, combinations and development of the elements in the glaze themselves. These glazes are developed in the high fire kiln, requiring of the ceramist

an absolute technical knowledge of their production, and great discrimination in their effective use.

Crystalline glazes are both beautiful and rare. Mr. Foster likens them to "snowflakes, or to the delicate tracery of frost on a window pane." "They are produced," he adds, "in much the same manner as are some of the marvelous rock crystal formations in nature, as when the molten magmas of the earth's surface began to cool and solidify, and crystallized minerals were formed."

In adapting this natural process to a highly controlled ceramic technique, Mr. Foster has found these considerations to be most important:

"First: The chemical composition of the glaze might be said to comprise essentially a compound which has a crystallizing nature, together with sufficient other glass-forming substances to provide the liquid matrix in which the crystals may grow when the whole composition is melted. Thus, the glaze, when melted, corresponds to a supersaturated solution of a compound which may crystallize out of solution upon cooling.

"Second: The firing of the ware must be carried out in such a way that the temperature is raised to a point where the whole composition melts, and sufficient fluidity is achieved so that the nuclei of the crystallizing compound may move about, isolate and identify themselves in the liquid.

"Third: The cooling cycle must be regulated and the temperature dropped to a range where the glaze will not all flow off the ware in the kiln, yet where



BOWL

by JOHN A. FOSTER, AMERICAN, CONTEMPORARY

Gift of Miss Sarah M. Sheridan and Dr. and Mrs. George Kamperman, 1948

it still exists in a sufficiently sluggish, semi-fluid state for the compound to crystallize, and for the individual crystals to develop about their nuclei as needles, circles, fans, fronds, radial clusters, or whatever pattern their particular growth-habit directs."

The formulæ for the glazes are usually simple; it is upon the control of the firing and cooling of the ware that the result depends, and the narrow temperature range within which the crystal growth occurs, greatly limiting the number of successful pieces obtained, accounts for the rarity of the ware. "Some pieces in slightly hotter parts of the kiln will be over-fired with most of the glaze having flown off the piece; others in cooler areas may be wholly undeveloped or in intermediate stages of partial development. Some may be fired a second or third time and saved, while others are a total loss. It is the occasional exceptionally fine and unusual piece which seems to justify coping with the hazards involved."

The beautiful two color effects of our bowls are the results of the use of two properly proportioned coloring oxides, one of which was selected by the crystals, the other absorbed by the surrounding matrix. In the low green-white bowl may be seen all of the stages in the development of the crystalline glaze, from the few small groups of needle crystals just beginning their nuclear growth, caught in the frozen pool in the center of the bowl, to the fully developed bursts.

A. F. PAGE

¹Acc. no. 48.145. Diameter $8\frac{3}{4}$ inches; height $2\frac{3}{8}$ inches. Gift of Miss Sarah M. Sheridan, 1948.

²Acc. no. 48.144. Diameter $7\frac{1}{2}$ inches; height $3\frac{3}{8}$ inches. Gift of Dr. and Mrs. George Kamperman, 1948.

AN EARLY PORTRAIT by GILBERT STUART

During the years just preceding the American Revolution, when Newport rivalled New York and Boston as a commercial and cultural center, one of the great merchant princes of the city had portraits painted of himself and his family. These were lost to sight for years; only recently have researches brought about correct attribution and identification. Through the generosity of Dexter Ferry, Jr., the Detroit Institute of Arts has been fortunate in securing one of these portraits, now identified as that of Mrs. Aaron Lopez and her son Joshua by the hand of the young Gilbert Stuart.¹ This canvas brings to the collection not only the likenesses of members of one of the wealthiest and most prominent families of mid-eighteenth century New England, but also a very rare work, one of the earliest known portraits by Gilbert Stuart.

For years the painting was attributed to Cosmo Alexander, Gilbert Stuart's teacher. Yet it was known that Stuart, upon his return from Scotland around 1773, had painted portraits of the Lopez family. References to them by Stuart's biographers, however, were extremely general in nature. Lawrence Park's com-



MRS. SARAH LOPEZ AND HER SON
by GILBERT STUART, AMERICAN, 1737-1815
Gift of Dexter M. Ferry, Jr., 1948

pilation of portraits by Stuart, for instance, lists No. 505 as "Lopez." "According to Mason" Park says, "the Lopez family were wealthy Jews, residing in Newport, and their portraits were painted in the youthful days of Stuart. The family is extinct and all trace of the pictures is lost."² Hannah London also wrote of Stuart that, "at the age of eighteen, after some training, he went abroad to study, and returned within two years . . . Shortly after his return (to Newport), he began to paint portraits of the wealthy Jewish families then living there, including the Lopez family, of whose portrait now, unfortunately, there is no trace."³

No further light seems to have been thrown upon the paintings until the late William Sawitzsky, authority on Gilbert Stuart's early work, stated that in his opinion the double portrait of "the young woman and her son" was possibly an early one by Stuart.⁴ He based his attribution in great part upon the stylistic similarity between that painting and the Stuart *Portrait of Mrs. John Banister and Her Son* from the Redwood Library, Newport. Both women are shown with slender, sloping shoulders, somewhat squarish faces, clearly defined brows and hairlines, and rather thin upper lips. Flexner, it is true, finds that the young Stuart and Cosmo Alexander possess certain of these points in common,⁵ but the latter's *Portrait of Mrs. William Hunter and Daughter*, although similar in composition, lacks the solidity of form of the Banister portrait and the portrait now in Detroit. Sawitzsky's attribution of our portrait to Gilbert Stuart, later quoted in *Antiques*,⁶ has now been accepted by other authorities.

But, while Stuart was accepted as the artist of our double portrait, the identity of the sitters was still a mystery. It remained for Lawrence Phelps Tower⁷ to give as his clue to identification an old photograph in the American Jewish Historical Society on the back of which was written: "Sarah Lopez, wife of Aaron Lopez and her son, Joshua." The handwriting is that of the late Reverend J. J. Lyons, an American Jewish historian of unquestioned repute.

As might be expected, documents and early records make far more frequent mention of the wealthy and well-established families who posed for Stuart than of the struggling young painter himself. The Newport to which Stuart's father moved his wife and children from Narragansett was a prosperous, thriving community. Its fine harbor, mild climate, excellent fishing, and tolerant laws, had attracted settlers like the Lopez family from Europe and the West Indies. Stuart's biographers agree for the most part that Newport offered a better field, artistically, than many other Colonial cities. Flexner mentions the Salvator Rosas in the Hunter home.⁸ Mason comments, "On many walls he could see prints that were tolerably good; curious old Dutch tiles looked out upon him from mop-boards and mantels, and the richly colored wares of China were to be seen in almost every household. But portraits were not readily to be found."⁹ A diary of 1769 mentions an alleged Kneller owned by Isaac Hart of Newport, and pictures in the Banister collection.¹⁰ Perhaps one of the most fruitful suggestions was made by Whitley when he said, "Stuart was fortunate in that Newport, small as the town was, had artistic traditions and did not lack pictures. Robert Feke . . . painted portraits in Newport before Stuart was born."¹¹ This group of Newport portraits by Feke, done for the most part during the 1740's, may have had far more influence upon the youthful Stuart than has heretofore been recognized, and calls for more research.¹²

The Sarah Lopez of our portrait was born a Rivera, both families emigrating from Portugal and Spain. Aaron Lopez,¹³ driven out by the Inquisition, settled in Newport in 1752 at the age of twenty-one and, after the death of his first wife, married Sarah Rivera. The little Joshua shown as a boy of about five or six in our portrait, clad in his white suit and black tie, was one of ten children

by this marriage; later Joshua was to marry the only daughter of the Reverend Isaac Touro, Newport's eminent first Jewish minister.¹⁴

Aaron Lopez was the foremost of the keen and energetic merchants who made Newport such an important trade center that for a time more ships were sailing from there than from New York. The 1760's and 1770's saw Newport as one of the busiest and gayest cities in the Colonies. With Newport's commercial prosperity at its peak, Aaron Lopez's contributions to this prosperity can be understood by inspecting his day books, shipping records and ledgers.¹⁵ His ships left for ports in the West Indies, Africa, Europe, the Falkland Islands; he owned more than thirty at the outbreak of the Revolution. With his father-in-law, Jacob Rodriguez Rivera, Lopez promoted the whaling and sperm oil industry and, like a number of his compatriots, engaged in the triangular trading of molasses, rum and slaves, between the West Indies, Newport and Africa.¹⁶ Gutstein, having sifted a vast amount of these commercial records, states that, "among the 445 letters, sailing orders, invoices, bills of lading and trading agreements pertaining to Rhode Island commerce between 1726 and 1774, published by the Massachusetts Historical Society, 225 relate directly to Aaron Lopez."¹⁷

Newport Jewish merchants were active in the social life of their community, especially in the Masonic order; men of the Lopez family were among the earliest members of St. John's Lodge.¹⁸ They also belonged to a Jewish Men's Club¹⁹ based on the social clubs of Boston and old England, in which stately dinners were followed by evenings of whist and picquet. Toasts were drunk in wine brought back from distant vineyards on Lopez ships. There was an urbanity about their way of living. Homes were spacious. The Aaron Lopez mansion, at 131 Thames Street, was so large that a British officer, during the occupation of Newport, wrote he could station "200 men at Lopez house on the East Side."²⁰

The Lopez and Rivera families, as Sephardic Jews, were people of culture as well as business acumen. Both families contributed to the founding and stocking of the Redwood Library at Newport (1747); Aaron laid the cornerstone of the Newport Synagogue in 1763. After the Revolution drove Aaron Lopez and his family from Newport to Leicester, Massachusetts, he founded the Leicester Academy. Early records contain numerous references to Aaron's integrity and high character, such as this one: "The character of Mr. Lopez, as a Friend to the Liberties and Independence of the United States is clear and unimpeached, as will be testified by some honorable Members of this House (Congress) . . . He is a merchant of extensive Business, is active, enterprising and public spirited."²¹ Aaron's death, caused by an accident in 1782, brought forth eulogies from every denomination, including a particularly warm one by his old friend Dr. Ezra Stiles, president of Yale.²²

The *Detroit Portrait of Mrs. Lopez and her son* possesses considerable significance, both historically and artistically, as one of the earliest known portraits by Gilbert Stuart. It reveals how the urge to paint came forward clearly and unmistakably despite frustrating handicaps in the paucity of materials and

instruction. Although our Colonies and our new Republic lacked the old traditions and official academies of Europe, certain men, Stuart, Smibert, Robert Feke, Ralph Earl, to mention only a few—were driven by forces stronger than themselves. Certain men were born to be painters, just as others were to be lawyers or doctors.

Our portrait of the brown-eyed Mrs. Lopez, in her gown of soft blue with its stylized folds, possesses a luminosity, solidity of form, and largeness of composition which come out strongly in Stuart's later work. The boy is less firmly depicted than his mother. Yet in the carefully observed detail with which Mrs. Lopez is shown, the delicate linear pattern of white lace, the definitely characterized features, there is an objectivity and great freshness which make the painting a charming work.

ELIZABETH H. PAYNE

¹Acc. no. 48.146. Oil on canvas. Height 26 inches; width 21½ inches. Gift of Dexter M. Ferry, Jr., 1948.

²Park, Lawrence *Gilbert Stuart*, New York, 1926, vol. I, p. 488. The biographical data by John Hill Morgan gives the same information in vol. I, p. 22.

³London, Hannah R. *Portraits of Jews by Gilbert Stuart*, New York, 1927, p. 47.

⁴Letter from William Sawitzky to Francis P. Garvan, January 27, 1937. "I feel that the picture of a 'Woman and her son' is possibly the earliest portrait by Stuart which has been found, and that it may be one of the lost Lopez pictures . . ." The painting was in Mr. Garvan's collection for a time.

⁵Flexner, James Thomas, *America's Old Masters*, Viking Press, New York, 1939, p. 256.

⁶"The Lost Lopez Portrait" by Lawrence Phelps Tower, in *Antiques*, April 1941, p. 185.

⁷*Ibid.*

⁸Flexner, James Thomas, *op. cit.*, p. 254. Dr. Hunter is said to have supplied Stuart with his first brushes and colors.

⁹Mason, George C., *Life and Works of Gilbert Stuart*, New York, 1879, p. 5.

¹⁰Diary of Pierre Eugène du Simitière, who visited Rhode Island in 1769. Quoted in *Magazine of American History*, vol. 3, 1879, p. 452.

¹¹Whitley, William T., *Gilbert Stuart*, Cambridge, Mass., 1932, p. 5.

¹²This point was suggested earlier by E. P. Richardson, *Art Quarterly*, Winter 1945, p. 10.

¹³Aaron Lopez, Jacob Rivera, Isaac Touro and his son Abraham, are all mentioned as having been painted at this period by Stuart. An article by Lawrence Phelps Tower in *Think*, February 1948, p. 13, refers to the portrait of Aaron Lopez, in the background of which is shown our first flag with 13 stars and stripes, flying from a ship in the harbor of Newport.

¹⁴Gutstein, Morris, *The Story of the Jews of Newport*, New York, 1936, pp. 241 and 304.

¹⁵Lopez shipping book owned by the Newport Historical Society. *The Massachusetts Historical Society Collections*, series IX and X (1914-15), and the *Publications of the American Jewish Historical Society* contain numerous Lopez papers.

¹⁶From *Bulletin of the Newport Historical Society*, No. 62, July 1927 (Roderick Terry on the *Newport Slave Trade*).

¹⁷Gutstein, *op. cit.*, p. 165.

¹⁸*Publications of A. J. H. S.*, Vol. XIX, p. 18.

¹⁹Friedman, Lee M., *Jewish Pioneers and Patriots*, New York, 1943, p. 199. The Club was formed in 1761.

²⁰From *Diary* of Frederick MacKenzie, quoted in *Bulletin of the Newport Historical Society*, No. 93, p. 8.

²¹From *Papers of Continental Congress*, No. 76, vol. 24 (April 19, 1780), p. 199.

²²Dr. Stiles was pastor of the Second Church at Newport for a time, and a close friend of the Lopez family. The tribute to Aaron Lopez, from Ezra Stiles' diary, is quoted in Gutstein, *op. cit.*, p. 195.

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